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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 42

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/94)

Draft resolution (A/72/L.2)

Mr. Biang (Gabon): Before I begin my formal statement, allow me to express my firm and strong condemnation of the tragic attacks that hit New York City yesterday. I present my deepest condolences to the Government of the United States of America and my solidarity to the victims' families.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States on the agenda item on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Allow me also to associate my statement with that to be delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This is a matter of great importance to the Group of African States, and indeed to Africa in general. At the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, held in January 2017, the African Heads of State and Government deliberated on this matter. Their call was loud and clear for the lifting of the long-standing unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba.

It has now been 55 years since the embargo against Cuba was unilaterally imposed by the United States of America. Moreover, for more than two decades the will of the international community, as expressed in the General Assembly, has overwhelmingly urged and appealed for the immediate end of the long-standing economic embargo against Cuba. It is particularly regrettable that after the improvement in the bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba that was achieved during the previous United States Administration, the blockade against Cuba has recently been strengthened. That is clearly a step backwards in the bilateral relations between the two countries, which should be urgently addressed.

We are particularly concerned that the embargo continues to causes great economic hardship for the people of Cuba, particularly the poor and most vulnerable. Moreover, it most certainly makes the achievement of sustainable development even more elusive. Therefore, it undermines our collective efforts to universally push towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one is left behind. The international community needs to stand together in bringing the blockade to an end. It is an infringement on the Cuban people's right to development.

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The African Group calls for the blockade against Cuba to be unequivocally lifted, not only because it is right to do so, but also because of Cuba's many positive contributions over the past decades as a responsible member of the international community. In fact, Cuba has a proud history in Africa, both in its support for Africa's struggle for liberation and, more recently, in its contributions to alleviating the effects of some of the major health crises that the continent has faced in recent years. The people of Africa will continue to remember those contributions, and the people of Cuba should continue to be proud of their nation's important contributions as a responsible member of the international community.

Accordingly, the Group of African States reaffirms its full support for draft resolution A/72/L.2, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We think that a diplomatic and political solution can be found to the matter, and we are of the firm belief that that it will be beneficial to both the United States of America and Cuba, in addition to other countries. The Group of African States further reiterates the call on the Government of the United States to lift the long-standing embargo against Cuba.

Mr. Morejón Pazmiño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the immense pleasure of welcoming the Foreign Minister of Cuba and his delegation, who are present with us today. They are always very welcome.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 42, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the agenda item that we are discussing (A/72/94). The Group once again deplores the fact that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States 55 years ago against our brotherly Republic of Cuba remains in full application and continues to be strengthened. The Group recalls the positive steps taken by the previous Administration of the United States in 2015 and 2016, which, though still inadequate to effectively end the impact of the embargo, were headed in the right direction. The Group also deplores the new policy established by the current President of the United States, which is aimed at strengthening the embargo against Cuba. The Group believes that such a policy is a setback in the process of achieving normalized relations between the two countries.

The Group of 77 and China reiterates its commitment to the purposes, principles and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as the freedom of international trade and navigation. We believe that it is the duty and responsibility of every Member State to strictly comply with those principles. We are also of the view that any policy or action that disregards those principles — in this case, the unilateral economic sanctions against Cuba — should be seriously considered for immediate repeal.

Given that the embargo by the United States against Cuba has continued for more than 50 years, the Group of 77 and China expresses deep concern about the prolonged negative effects that the economic sanctions and travel restrictions have had on Cuba and its people. From April 2016 to June of this year, the impact of the United States embargo on Cuba's foreign trade amounts to more than $4 billion. Limited foreign investment and difficult access to development credits translate directly into economic hardship and humanitarian impacts for the people of Cuba.

The country's socioeconomic reforms have also been hampered by the cruel embargo. The Group of 77 and China fears that if the economic sanctions continue, Cuba's potential for development in both the economic and human development spheres will be unjustly undermined. It will be impossible for Cuba to successfully embark on the path towards sustainable development, as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, for which all Member States have pledged their support.

Over many decades, Cuba has extensively and continuously contributed to the international community, particularly through its remarkable supply of medical assistance to countries in need. Cuba's emergency assistance to African countries that were affected by the Ebola virus in West Africa is a great example of its solidarity with the international community. Therefore, the Group of 77 and China commends Cuba's contributions to humanitarian assistance and would like to express the hope that with the permanent lifting of the embargo by the United States, Cuba will be granted the opportunity that it has long deserved to fully cooperate with the global

community and international organizations with respect to, inter alia, health, the environment and agriculture.

To conclude, the Group of and China would like to reiterate its strong support for the implementation of the recommendations of resolution 71/5. We would like to reiterate our call for the ending of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The urgency and necessity of our call is further highlighted by the ongoing global collective endeavour to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, the Group of 77 and China would like to appeal to the international community to further step up its efforts in support of the lifting of the embargo, not only for Cuba's prospects, but also for the full achievement of economic and social development of all members of the entire global community as a whole. That is the declaration of the Group of 77 and China.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to propose that the list of speakers on the current topic be closed, in view of the large number of delegations inscribed on the list.

It was so decided.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): Before I make my formal statement, I wish to express, on behalf of my delegation, our condolences to the Government and the people of the United States of America for the loss of lives sustained as a result of the terrible terrorist attack in New York yesterday, which we condemn in unequivocal terms.

I also welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba and his delegation to New York. It is a pleasure to see him again in our midst.

I have the honour to address the General Assembly, on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to express our support for the draft resolution on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba (A/72/L.2). The General Assembly has consistently adopted this annual text by an overwhelming majority since it was first introduced in 1992. ASEAN member States have voted unanimously in favour of the resolution for the past 16 years, and this marks the third year that ASEAN has made a statement in the Assembly calling for the unilateral embargo against Cuba to be lifted as soon as possible. It is our firm belief that differences between States should be resolved through engagement and inclusion, not confrontation and isolation. That would be in concord with the fundamental principles of sovereign equality, non-interference and non-intervention, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

ASEAN welcomes the restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States in 2015. That was an important step towards the normalization of bilateral relations and remains key to building better regional relations in the Americas. A more important step will be for the United States to end its economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba. That would significantly improve the quality of life and living standards of the Cuban people and contribute to the economic and social development of Cuba.

Bringing an end to the embargo would also advance the Assembly's efforts towards achieving the inclusive 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ASEAN encourages the United States and Cuba in their efforts to chart a new way forward. We recognize that much remains to be done. We encourage the United States and Cuba to remain committed to an open and constructive dialogue, underpinned by mutual respect. ASEAN joins the other members of the Assembly in reiterating our support for the lifting of the unilateral embargo against Cuba as soon as possible.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin my statement by greeting Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and his delegation and to welcome them to this House of ours.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

CELAC once again welcomes the steps taken in 2015 and 2016 by Cuba and the United States of America to commence the normalization of their diplomatic relations. That marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of peace and coexistence among the American nations. However, we regret that the blockade remains a reality for the Cuban people. It is undeniable that it is the main obstacle to the normal development of Cuba. The report of the Secretary-General (A/72/94) confirms the cost of this policy for the country, as it causes considerable and unjustifiable harm to the well-being of the Cuban people and is contrary to the wishes for peace of the Latin American peoples, as enshrined

in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace.

We also deplore the new policy announced by the current United States Administration that is intended to strengthen the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. It is a setback in the process of normalization of bilateral relations between the two countries. The economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba is contrary to the letter, spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

CELAC reiterates its firm rejection of the application of laws and measures that are contrary to international law, such as the Helms-Burton Act, including those with extraterritorial effects, as well as of the increasing harassment of Cuba's international financial transactions, in disregard of the political will of the international community. We therefore urge the Government of the United States of America to stop implementing them. The United States Congress has the authority to end the Cuban embargo completely. Moreover, it has has been demonstrated that the President of the United States, if he so wishes, may use his broad executive powers to substantially amend the application of the blockade.

CELAC reiterates its special declaration on the need to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade of the United States against Cuba — adopted at the fifth Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, on 25 January 2017 — by which the Government of the United States of America was requested to fulfil the successive resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and, in response to the repeated calls from the international community, to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade it maintains against Cuba.

We believe that the return to the Republic of Cuba of the land occupied by the United States naval base in Guantanamo, which has been repeatedly requested by the Cuban people and Government, should be an important element in the process of the normalization of relations between the two countries, by means of a bilateral dialogue that adheres to international law.

The Charter of the United Nations enshrines laws, obligations and principles that have become part of the legal heritage, not just of international law but of humankind. It should not be violated or abused by any Member State. Member States should adjust their national and international actions to the rights, obligations and principles enshrined in the Charter.

In 2015 and 2016, resolutions 70/5 and 71/5, on this item, were both adopted with 191 votes in favour, confirming the near universality of this cause.

For all those reasons, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States will once again decisively support the adoption of draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/72/L.2). We emphasize the inconsistency of the application of coercitive unilateral measures that are not supported by international law or by the letter, the spirit and the purposes and principles of the Charter.

We reiterate our call on the United States to accept the call of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, of every region of the world and of its own people to put an end once and for all to the unjust embargo against the Republic of Cuba.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): First, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to join others in condemning the terrible terrorist act that took place in lower Manhattan yesterday. Our condolences go out to the families who lost loved ones, and we stand in solidarity with the United States of America, Argentina, Belgium and the entire international community as together we continue to fight this scourge.

I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the presence of the honourable Foreign Minister of Cuba.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, as well as that to be delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Four States members of CARICOM — Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago — established diplomatic relations with Cuba on 8 December 1972 in an independent, sovereign act in the face of strong opposition from their traditional ally, the United States of America. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago had become independent nation States in 1962, and Barbados and Guyana in 1966. As the other eight anglophone

Caribbean countries acceded to independence, they all followed the original four in establishing and building excellent relations with Cuba: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Suriname and Haiti, the two non-anglophone Caribbean nations with membership in CARICOM, had established diplomatic relations prior to their membership in this regional body.

The States members of CARICOM have maintained close relations with Cuba throughout the years of their independence, and that relationship has been strengthened through a wide range of programmes of cooperation in areas that include trade, health care, infrastructure and human resource development. In 2015, the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets Goals that guide the creation of the future that we want and which aims at leaving no one behind. Our future regional development is in many ways reliant upon our collective advancement and progress. The blockade works contrarily to those aspirations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Striving for peace and the right to development have been the deepest concerns of each member of our Caribbean Community since gaining independence. In that context, we view the embargo not just as a punitive act against Cuba, but as an impediment to our shared regional development.

The General Assembly has adopted a resolution on this item each year since 1992, condemning the ongoing impact of the embargo and declaring it to be in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. The Assembly's seventy-first session marked a milestone, when not a single Member State voted against resolution 71/5, calling for a definite end to the unilateral decision that has proved to be an untenable, unnecessary and undesirable fissure in our hemispheric family. Opposition to the policy is now almost universal. Citizens across the United States are joining the international community by increasingly voicing their disapproval and calling for the lifting of the unilateral sanctions. Today, 73 per cent of Americans and 63 per cent of Cubans living in the United States support the lifting of the blockade.

Yet, on 16 June the current President of the United States announced the strengthening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba as a key component of his policy towards Cuba. That was reaffirmed in his address to the United Nations in September, during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session (see A/72/PV.3). With its policy against Cuba, the new Administration will reverse the progress achieved since the former President announced, on 17 December 2014, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the beginning of a process to normalize bilateral ties.

In the light of that disappointing reversal, the Caribbean Community wishes to reiterate to the General Assembly, as we did during the general debate in September (see A/72/PV.23), our unequivocal commitment and unceasing call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We remain fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly to the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and navigation.

CARICOM enjoys friendly relations with both Cuba and the United States. The two neighbours — a mere 90 miles apart — have produced great scholars, scientists and great global leaders. The two countries possess proud and noble histories and are populated by friendly, open and loving peoples. The progress achieved in 2015 and 2016 has shown that Cuba and the United States can live together, respecting their differences, and that they are able to cooperate for the benefit of the two countries and peoples.

Therefore, CARICOM remains optimistic that there will be a diplomatic solution to the long-standing issue, which is now a mere relic of the Cold War. To that end, CARICOM consistently supports subregional, regional and international efforts to promote constructive dialogue to bring about the cessation, sooner rather than later, of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. It is within that context that the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community unstintingly support draft resolution A/72/L.2, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). But first let me express the solidarity and compassion of the member States of

OIC to the United States of America in the wake of the terrorist attacks yesterday here in New York.

I warmly welcome Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, who is present here today.

A year ago, almost to the day, the United States Administration, through the voice of its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, chose, for the first time since 1992, to abstain in the voting during the consideration of the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (see A/71/PV.32). That decision of the Permanent Representative gave rise to hope in the international community in general and in the member States of OIC in particular, hope based on the positive evolution of relations between the United States and Cuba initiated by the American President at the time. It was illustrated, inter alia, by the reopening of the respective embassies of the two countries, in Washington, D.C., and in Havana, the restoration of commercial flights between the two States and the visit of the former American President to Cuba in March 2016.

Despite the positive development initiated by the American presidency with a view to gradually normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba, the American economic embargo — which constitutes the central pillar of sanctions against Cuba — remains. That situation is a source of serious concern, not just for Cuba, but also for a large part of the international community, including the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The concern of the OIC is justified in view of the decision taken last June by the new United States Administration to cancel, with immediate effect, the agreement between Washington and Havana under the previous American Administration.

Through this statement, the OIC member States reaffirm their opposition to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba more than 50 years ago, which, it would seem, did not have the desired effect. On the contrary, it created international solidarity around Cuba, which has been demonstrated in recent years by massive votes to lift the embargo by almost every State Member of our Organization. The latest vote in the Assembly, in 2016, resulted in 191 votes in favour and 2 abstentions (see A/71/PV.32).

In a world firmly focused on globalization and the opening of markets to international trade, States members of the OIC, while concerned about the statements of the new Administration of the United States of America that are bringing recent developments into question, underscore that the commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba remains one of the main obstacles to the economic and social development of that country.

When, at the initiative of the United Nations, the international community has embarked on a new development programme with a view to 2030, the OIC member States consider that the time has come to lift the embargo against Cuba so as to enable that country and its people to benefit fully from the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure that no one is left behind. In that perspective, the OIC member States very firmly support draft resolution A/72/L.2, entitled "Necessity of lifting the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba", and call on States Members of the United Nations to vote overwhelmingly in favour of it, as they did last year.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to speak on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

First, we would like to pay our respects and offer a very warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba. We would also like to express our gratitude for the report by the Secretary-General on this very important issue (A/72/94).

Over the past 26 years, the General Assembly has every year expressed its resounding support for and solidarity with the people and the Government of Cuba through its decisive support for the resolution calling for the lifting of the embargo imposed by the United States of America against that sovereign country. Last year, 191 States Members of the Organization voted in favour of the resolution (resolution 71/5).

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries takes this opportunity to reiterate its full opposition to the enactment and imposition of unilateral coercive measures, given their extraterritorial implications and

illegal nature. Likewise, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has on several occasions repeated its call on the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba more than 55 years ago, which is unilateral and illegal. The embargo — apart from violating international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles that govern peaceful relations among States — is also a violation of Cuba's right to fully interact with the international community.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has historically taken a position of principle in rejecting unilateral coercive measures, particularly those used as instruments of political or economic and financial pressure against States, particularly against developing countries. Those positions were reaffirmed recently, when on 20 September, at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Movement held under the theme "Promulgation and implementation of unilateral coercive measures, in violation of international law and the human rights of the peoples subjected to them", adopted the Political Declaration of New York.

The embargo against Cuba is a perfect example of the adverse effects of unilateral coercive measures affecting the welfare of peoples, impeding the full enjoyment of their human rights. The direct and indirect harm inflicted by this undeserved embargo against Cuba is vast. It affects all crucial sectors of the Cuban economy, including public health, nutrition and agriculture, as well as banking, trade, investment and tourism. It also denies Cuba access to markets, aid from international financial institutions and technology transfers, and it creates obstacles to the socioeconomic development of the country. Further, the embargo is the main obstacle to wider access to the Internet, the exchange of ideas and the development of cultural, sports and scientific relations.

The continuation of the embargo is completely unjustifiable and is inappropriate for our times. It also runs counter to Cuba's efforts to attain sustainable development, including the Goals established in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The economic hardship affecting the Cuban people caused by the application of the economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba amounts to $822 billion, taking into account the depreciation of the dollar with respect to the gold price in the international market. At current prices, over the years, the blockade has caused damages of more than $130 billion.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries believes the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States of America to be a positive first step in the process towards the normalization of bilateral relations. At the same time, it is appropriate to point out that the implementation of the blockade against Cuba has not changed. Even some progress in the normalization of bilateral relations between the two countries is now threatened, as is demonstrated by the new policies established in June 2017 by the current President of the United States of America, acting to strengthen the embargo against Cuba.

Moreover, although regulations were issued on 15 January 2015 by the Department of Commerce and the Treasury that amounted to steps in the right direction in areas such as travel to Cuba, telecommunications and remittances, those have had a limited scope and modified only some aspects related to the implementation of the blockade. Despite the historic decision of former United States President Barack Obama to notify the United States Congress of his decision to remove Cuba from the so-called list of States sponsoring international terrorism — a unilateral and illegal list that should never have included Cuba — we have seen no greater flexibility regarding all of the complexities of the prohibitions and restrictions that stem from the laws and regulations of the blockade against Cuba.

In the light of all this, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reaffirms its call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, as reiterated by the Heads of State and Government of the Movement during the seventeenth summit, held on Venezuela's Margarita Island, in September 2016.

The fact that 191 States Members of the Organization voted in favour of resolution 71/5 last year is an expression of unanimity in the international community, demanding an end to the 55-year-long embargo and full adherence to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to the norms of international law, including the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. At present, more than 190 nations are economically and politically involved with Cuba, while the United States of America remains

alone in implementing its policy of unjustified and illegal economic sanctions.

Consequently, the States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries once again urge the Government of the United States of America to yield to the overwhelming will of the international community and rectify its failed policies in full compliance with all the pertinent resolutions of this General Assembly. That requires the immediate and full end of the embargo imposed on Cuba.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, while reiterating its commitment to the promotion, preservation and strengthening of multilateralism, reaffirms that full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations is an essential element for the effective maintenance of international peace and security. That is why the international community must continue working together to reverse and eliminate unilateral coercive measures, including the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, given, inter alia, its illegal character.

I now wish to make the following statement in my national capacity.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its unequivocal support for the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of any country. For us, respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law is an obligation we have assumed within the Organization, and we can entertain no double standards or biased interpretations.

The blockade against the sister Republic of Cuba and its people is not only illegal and in violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations, but also constitutes a criminal act of continued aggression by the strongest Power on the planet against another State. This savage and disproportionate act in contemporary history has gone on now for 55 years as the most abject expression of contempt against the fundamental rights of an entire people — the Cuban people.

The blockade against Cuba is as illegal as it is futile in its ridiculous desire to shake the unwavering decision of the Cuban people to build their own destiny and refuse to be a colony or a country under any foreign Power. It fails to recognize the deeply patriotic and revolutionary character of the people of Martí and Fidel and their unequivocal decision to build socialism, a new society according to their own interests and characteristics.

Amid the hostility of the United States and all kinds of difficulties and hardships caused by the criminal blockade, Cuba has managed to stand for more than five decades as a moral and political reference point for the world. Although it has few resources, that sister nation has always offered solidarity and assistance to all peoples, always extending its hand and support without conditions to countries that need it to fight poverty or that need humanitarian assistance because of natural disasters and epidemic outbreaks such as Ebola and cholera.

On the other hand, the noble Cuban people have played a fundamental role fighting colonialism and apartheid for the liberation of peoples. The peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean can bear witness to that solidarity and commitment to the cause of mankind. That is why we will vote overwhelmingly in favour of draft resolution A/72/L.2, condemning the blockade against Cuba.

Venezuela once again calls on the Government of the United States to put an immediate end to the policy of economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. Likewise, we categorically reject the recent actions of the United States Administration that seek to reverse the process of normalizing relations between the two countries that began a few years ago. That is the reaffirmation of interventionist policy and American interference in our region, which has a long and sad history of coups d'état, invasions and destabilization. It is a policy of walls, sanctions and aggression that threatens the peace and security of our region.

Our country has also been attacked by the United States. It imposes sanctions on us and destabilizes us. However, our people will be able to defend their sovereignty and revolution. We want Cuba to know that Venezuela and our people stand with it. We shall honour our friendship and solidarity. The United States hopes to undermine our loyalty to Chávez and admiration for Fidel, and our conviction regarding socialism. It wants to bend the will of our people, and that explains the blockade, the sanctions, the lies and all kinds of attacks. The United States is mistaken — we are the sons of Bolívar and Martí, and we will win.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I want to start by expressing our condolences to our brothers and sisters in Argentina and Belgium, whose citizens

numbered among the victims in the terrorist attack in New York City. While our hearts are broken, our resolve is strong. They hit our city, where we all come together and work together, but we always have to be strong enough to let them know terrorism will not win. If we stand together, we will once and for all defeat the evil. We thank everyone for the condolences, support and good wishes sent our way, which we certainly appreciate.

For more than 55 years, the Cuban regime has used this debate in the General Assembly as a shiny object to distract the world's attention from the destruction it has inflicted on its own people and on others in the western hemisphere. Even during the Cuban missile crisis, when the Castro dictatorship allowed the Soviet Union to secretly install nuclear missiles in Cuba, the Cuban regime and its Soviet allies claimed that the real threat to peace was not the missiles aimed at America. They said that the real threat was the United States' discovery of those missiles. At the time, Adlai Stevenson, United States Ambassador to the United Nations, identified the Cuban regime's habit of pointing fingers anywhere but at itself. He said:

> "This is the first time... I have ever heard it said that the crime is not the burglar but the discovery of the burglar, and that the threat is not the clandestine missiles in Cuba but their discovery and the limited measures taken to quarantine further infection." (*S/PV.1025, para. 7*)

Today, the crime is the Cuban Government's continued repression of its people and failure to meet even the minimum requirements of a free and just society. Our response has been to stand with the Cuban people and their right to determine their own future. For that, each year the Assembly's time is wasted in considering this resolution, and the United States is subjected to all manner of ridiculous claims — anything to deflect attention from the regime that is actually responsible for the suffering of the Cuban people. But the United States will not be distracted. We will not lose sight of what stands between the Cuban people and the free and democratic future that is their right. For that reason, and for the twenty-fifth time in 26 years, the United States will vote against the draft resolution under this item.

One year ago, the United States abstained in the voting on resolution 71/5, under this item. The reason given was that the continuation of the embargo was not isolating Cuba but was, in fact, isolating the United States. It is true that we had been left nearly alone in opposition to this annual resolution. No doubt there will be some here who do not understand how we can take such opposite positions, separated by just 12 months. They will wonder how we could passively accept this resolution last year and energetically oppose it this year.

To those who are confused as to where the United States stands, let me be clear. As is their right under our Constitution, the American people have spoken. They have chosen a new President, and he has chosen a new Ambassador to the United Nations. As long as the Cuban people continue to be deprived of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and as long as the proceeds from trade with Cuba go to prop up the dictatorial regime responsible for denying those rights, the United States does not fear isolation in this Hall or anywhere else.

Our principles are not up for a vote. They are enshrined in our Constitution. They also happen to be enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. As long as we are Members of the United Nations, we will stand for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms that the Member States in this body have pledged to protect, even if we have to stand alone.

The draft resolution before us (A/72/L.2) aims to end the United States economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba. But let us be honest about what we really see going on here. The Assembly does not have the power to end the United States embargo. It is based in United States law, which only the United States Congress can change. No, what the General Assembly is doing today — what it does every year at this time — is political theatre. The Cuban regime is sending the warped message to the world that the sad state of its economy, the oppression of its people and the export of its destructive ideology are not its fault. In the spirit of sending messages, I would like to direct the rest of my comments towards the Cuban people.

The American people strongly support their dreams to live in a country where they can speak freely, have uncensored access to the Internet, provide for their families and determine their leadership. We know that many of them have been made hopeful by the opening of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. That status is not changing. Our friendship and goodwill towards the Cuban people remain as strong as ever.

What they probably do not know is that their Government responded to that gesture of goodwill not by joining in the spirit in which it was offered, but by expanding its politically motivated detentions, harassment and violence against those who advocate for political and economic freedom in Cuba. What they cannot know, because their Government will not let them know, is that there were credible reports of almost 10,000 politically motivated detentions in Cuba in 2016 alone. That is a massive increase in detentions over recent years.

We had hoped our outreach to their Government would be met with greater freedom for them. Their Government silences its critics. It disrupts peaceful assemblies, censors independent journalists and rigs the economy so that the Government alone profits. Their Government has exported its bankrupt and destructive ideology to Venezuela. It has taught the Maduro regime how to silence journalists, crack down on the political opposition and impoverish its people. Now, millions of Venezuelans join them in being denied their basic rights.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As we speak here today, their Government is busy choosing the successor to the Castro dictatorship. It is attempting to fool them into believing they have a voice by holding local and regional so-called elections. But the process they are engaged in is not freedom. The results were determined before the first vote was cast. When the United States abstained in the voting on resolution 71/5 last year, its decision was explained by saying, "we recognize that the future of the island of course lies in the hands of the Cuban people" (*A/71/PV.32, p.15*). There is a casual cruelty to that remark for which I am profoundly sorry. Regrettably, as of today, the future of Cuba is not in their hands. It remains in the hands of their dictators.

The United States opposes the resolution today in continued solidarity with the Cuban people, and in the hope that they will one day be free to choose their own destiny. We might stand alone today, but when the day of freedom comes for the Cuban people — and it will come — we will rejoice with them as only a free people can.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): Before I begin my statement, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to express our solidarity and deepest condolences to the Governments and the peoples of the United States of America, Argentina and Belgium for the loss of innocent lives caused by the heinous terrorist attacks in lower Manhattan yesterday, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. Our thoughts and prayers go to the bereaved families of the victims.

I would like to extend my warmest welcome to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/72/94) on the implementation of resolution 71/5.

Viet Nam aligns itself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of Singapore, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively.

Our plenary meeting today marks the twenty-sixth consecutive year the General Assembly is considering and taking action on a draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". For so many years, the Assembly has repeatedly called for the end of the United States embargo against Cuba, but we have not yet achieved the ultimate goal of the text.

The economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba runs counter to international law and the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and is the most unjust and longest-lasting system of unilateral sanctions ever imposed against any country in our modern world history. It has inflicted enormous damage on all sectors of the Cuban economy and caused untold hardship for the Cuban people, preventing them from fully enjoying their human rights.

Here I would like to highlight that despite hardships caused by the blockade, the Cuban Government and people have always responded generously and in a timely manner to emergency appeals for humanitarian aid by sending doctors, medicine and equipment to many countries severely affected by epidemic diseases and natural disasters. We highly commend Cuba's great contribution to humankind and are grateful to the Cuban people.

Since 1992, when Cuba first introduced this draft resolution to the General Assembly, the support of people all over the world for the legitimate claims of the Cuban people has been ceaselessly growing. Last

year, 191 Member States voted in favour of resolution 71/5. At the general debate of the Assembly's current session in September, 37 heads of delegations spoke out against the blockade.

The restoration of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States in 2015 represented an important step in the right direction and brought hopes for improved relations between the two countries. However, measures recently announced by the United States Government to reinforce sanctions against Cuba are reversing the positive developments of the past two years.

It is the consistent policy of Viet Nam to oppose any imposition of unilateral embargoes and coercive measures on a sovereign State. We share the view that the continuation of the embargo against Cuba is unjustifiable. The strengthening of the blockade is a severe violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. It hinders not only the economic development of Cuba, but also international trade and the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, today Viet Nam will vote in favour of draft resolution A/72/L.2. By voting in favour, we join the international community in calling on the United States to put an immediate end to that obsolete policy, lift the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba and take positive and necessary steps towards the full normalization of relations with Cuba. An immediate removal of the blockade would be beneficial for both Cuba and the United States, as well as for peace and development in the region and the world, thereby living up to the overwhelming aspiration of the international community.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Viet Nam's strong support, friendship, cooperation and solidarity with the brotherly people of Cuba.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I begin, allow me to express Paraguay's most heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the families of the victims and to the Government and the people of the United States of America for the horrific terrorist attack that took place yesterday in New York, which we condemn.

Regarding the topic that brings us together today, Paraguay aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representative of El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group 77 and China.

The Republic of Paraguay joins the voices of the States that once again, through the General Assembly, call for the end of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. We reject the coercive measures that contravene international law and the Charter of the United Nations, undermine the foundations of multilateralism and negatively impact relations of friendship and cooperation among States and the economic and social development of peoples. We are convinced that dialogue and direct negotiation in good faith between the parties are the appropriate ways to resolve differences and find lasting and fair solutions that enable the peaceful and respectful coexistence among the nations of the world.

Paraguay urges the United States of America and Cuba not to backtrack on the progress achieved towards the normalization of their diplomatic relations but to continue with their best efforts to put an end to the long blockade and begin a new stage of relationship based on trust, respect and mutual development.

Finally, Paraguay again supports and promotes the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", which for the twenty-sixth consecutive occasion is before the General Assembly, and urges all Member States to support it.

Mr. Bandyopadhyay (India): Before I formally begin my statement, I would like to express my deepest condolences in connection with the victims of yesterday's brutal and heinous attack in New York, which we strongly and vehemently condemn. Our thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives.

India associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group 77 and China, and by the representative of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We welcome the Foreign Minister of Cuba among us here today. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/72/94) on the issue.

The issue of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed five decades ago by the United States against Cuba has now been considered annually by the General Assembly for more than two and a half decades.

The Assembly has consistently rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of the people around the world.

Last year, 191 Member States voted in favour of resolution 71/5, expressing their strong support for lifting the embargo. The General Assembly has also called upon all States, in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, to refrain from promulgating and applying, and to repeal and invalidate, laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects affecting the sovereignty of other States. The continued existence of the embargo, in contravention of world opinion as expressed by the Assembly, undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations itself.

As the world's largest democracy, with abiding faith in multilateralism, India stands in solidarity with the international community in its unambiguous rejection of domestic laws that have extraterritorial impacts. Embargoes impede the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected country, in particular children and women. They also hinder the full enjoyment of human rights, including the right to development, food, medical care and social services, among other things.

Successive reports of the Secretary-General, including this year's report, have established that the embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, has adversely affected the Cuban people and the country's development efforts. At the same time, we would like to acknowledge the notable achievements of the Cuban people in the socioeconomic and development fields, in particular Cuba's high ranking in the Human development Index and its achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals.

In launching the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders have again strongly urged all States to refrain from any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The continuation of the embargo would severely affect Cuba's ability to implement the comprehensive 2030 Agenda. Cuba's expertise in health care, achieved despite such conditions, enabled it to respond quickly, effectively and on a large scale to the call made by the General Assembly three years ago to all nations to respond to the Ebola crisis in Africa.

People-to-people contact holds immense possibilities for fostering better understanding between the two nations. The international community should step up its efforts to promote an environment free from sanctions and embargoes. India hopes for the withdrawal of the embargo as soon as possible. India supports draft resolution A/72/L.2, submitted by Cuba.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I begin my statement, let me say that Bolivia would like to join those expressing their solidarity with and condolences to the peoples of the United States, Argentina and Belgium following the terrible attack that took place some hours ago in this city.

At the outset, Bolivia welcomes the presence among us of Comrade Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and of his delegation.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/72/94) once again highlights the worldwide rejection of the economic, trade and financial blockade arbitarily and unilaterally imposed by the United States of America against the Cuban people and the entire international community. That blockade affects international cooperation. It affects health, nutrition, education and culture in Cuba. It affects Cuba's foreign trade and foreign investment. It also has financial and banking implications with regard to construction, tourism, transport, civil aviation and industry.

The blockade is an example of the unilateral way in which the United States acts in the world. Despite the comprehensive blockade, Cuba is an example of social development, cooperation and solidarity.

The United States is unilaterally imposing an unjust, unlawful, immoral embargo. It is imposing an extraterritorial embargo that contravenes the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States is imposing an embargo that violates the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, free trade and navigation. The United States is imposing an embargo that seeks to undermine the right of the Cuban people to self-determination and the efforts of their Government to combat poverty and inequality.

I want to take this opportunity to recall the words of Nelson Mandela, who told us:

> "During all my years in prison, Cuba was an inspiration. The victories of Cuba destroyed the myths of the invincibility of the white oppressor. They inspired the struggling peoples in South Africa at a key moment in the fight for the liberation in South Africa of our people from the apartheid regime. What country other than Cuba could point to a record of services of such generosity and solidarity with the causes of liberation in Africa? Cuba was an example of dedication and service to others."

I wish to reiterate that last phrase of Nelson Mandela: Cuba was and is an example of dedication and service to others.

They want to teach us lessons about democracy. Those who turn their backs on international law want to teach us about democracy. Those who believe that multilateralism is a theatre want to come and give us lessons on democracy. Those who organize coups d'état and who interfere in our political processes with absolute impunity want to come give us lessons about democracy. They also want to give us lessons on human rights — those who promote and have promoted torture want to teach us about human rights. Those who have turned the Guantanamo naval base into an illegal prison want to teach about human rights. Those who want to teach us about human rights have secret prisons and detention centres spread throughout the world. They want to come give us classes on multilateralism, those who do not believe in science or that climate change is brought about by human action.

They want us to believe that they are exceptional. Talk about exceptionalism is not only dangerous and offensive. It is not only injurious to the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Organization, it also demonstrates, as President Morales Ayma himself says, the arrogance of a Government that opposes all peoples. The Government of the United States is not exceptional, although it is unique. That Government is responsible for that genocidal embargo, unprecedented in the history of humankind. It is unique in that it does not respect international law. It is unique in that it is not interested in multilateralism. It is unique because it acts with the most blatant impunity.

It is time for the Assembly and for the United Nations to enforce the decisions we have taken. Bolivia once again resolutely supports the resolution before the Assembly. However, we wish to express our gratitude for the tremendous solidarity that has saved hundreds of thousands of lives in my country: the solidarity of the Cuban people. That solidarity is evident not only in my region but also throughout the world. When Ebola struck African countries, Cuba was there. When hurricanes struck our brothers in the Caribbean, Cuba was there. When illiteracy struck my country, Cuba was there, in the most remote places, with its medical staff — more than 50,000 medical staff throughout the world. However, even more important, Cuba stands as an example with its dignity and its unwavering strength.

Bolivia requests, urges and demands that the blockade be lifted.

Mr. Awad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our condolences to and solidarity with the peoples and the Governments of the United States, Argentina and Belgium for the tragic incident that took place in New York City yesterday.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; of Côte d'Ivoire, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and of Gabon, on behalf of the Group of African States. Allow me to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to express to him once again the perennial and full support and solidarity of Egypt with the people and Government of Cuba.

The unilateral policy imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has had implications for the economic and social lives of the Cuban people, as well as for their livelihoods. It has had an adverse impact on the Cuban people's access to food, medicine, education and advanced technology. The unilateral blockade has had a negative impact on the critical sectors of the Cuban economy. The manifestations of the blockade, which has been in place for more than five decades, affect Cuba's ability to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with its Goals and targets. The blockade runs counter to the commitment undertaken by Member States to leave no one behind, which constitutes the bedrock of our collective action.

Egypt will continue to advocate for the rights and demands of the Cuban people. We call for the full and

complete lifting of the coercive measures that have been imposed by the United States against Cuba since the 1950s. We hope that the parties will capitalize on the positive steps and developments that took place in 2016 as a prelude to the normalization of relations between the two countries.

Egypt supports the immediate lifting of the blockade imposed on Cuba, and we reiterate that continuing to insist on a historical mistake for years will never make it the right thing to do.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria): Yesterday in lower Manhattan, a few blocks away from United Nations Headquarters, a horrendous terrorist attack caused too many victims. We of course strongly condemn that attack, and we pay tribute to the victims and express our sympathy to our colleagues from the United States, Argentina and Belgium. It is high time to regroup, to fight this scourge, and we need everyone on board. That is precisely why this debate is taking place in this particular context.

While members of the international community unanimously welcomed in the Assembly the positive developments between Cuba and the United States over the past couple of years, hoping that those steps would pave the way towards the normalization of the bilateral relations and the eventual lifting of the embargo imposed on Cuba, we sadly realize that this embargo not only remains in place but has been strengthened.

Africa has spoken up, as have the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and even the Group of 77, with which of course we align ourselves. Algeria will continue to speak up and state its stance to its friends. And, because we are friends, frankness is our duty. We therefore reiterate our stance about the continuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo that has been unilaterally imposed against Cuba for more than five decades. Those sanctions, which we consider unjustified, not only exacerbate the sufferings of the Cuban people but obstruct the economic development of Cuba and hamper its efforts to achieve sustainable development, including the Goals set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The annual adoption by an overwhelming majority of the members of the General Assembly of a resolution calling for the lifting of the blockade against Cuba is a message not to be ignored, for it reflects the strong wish of the international community. Let me recall that Algeria has always stressed that Cuba, like any other Member State, has the right to freedom of trade and navigation and to expand trade on a mutually agreed basis with any economic partner. Algeria also fully shares the NAM position that has regularly rejected the imposition of unilateral acts or extraterritorial regulations that impede the development of any country, and all forms of coercive economic and trade measures. That position reflects our principles of foreign policy.

Algeria considers Cuba to be more than just a friend who stood by us in dire times. Cuba has done that in many parts of the world. In that regard, I would like to acknowledge the commitment and undeniable expertise of the Cuban doctors, which has always been demonstrated well beyond their borders. For example, when many hunkered down, Cuban doctors went to fight the Ebola crisis in Africa. They did it on our behalf and for the sake of the whole international community with no payback whatsoever.

Today more than ever, it is important to rebuild the momentum and move on the positive achievements made so far in the relations between Cuba and the United States. In engaging in a constructive and respectful bilateral dialogue in full respect of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, we will certainly chart a new way forward for the full normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States, leading to the lifting of the long-standing, unnecessary embargo for the mutual benefit of the peoples of both countries and the whole region and beyond, throughout the world.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to begin, as other delegations have before us, by expressing our heartfelt condolences to the people of the United States, to the families of the people who lost their lives, and to the American citizens in the wake of the heinous, fatal and senseless act of terror yesterday. Our condolences also go to Argentina and Belgium, which also lost citizens as a result of the terror attack.

We thank the Secretary-General for preparing the report on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/72/94).

The position of the Russian Federation on the actions of the United States remains consistent and unchanged. In solidarity with the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community, we strongly support the urgent abolition of the United States blockade against Cuba, introduced almost 60 years ago, in all its manifestations. The embargo against Cuba is not only a relic of the past, but a glaring example of gross interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State through sanctions, hindering that State's socioeconomic development and infringing on the legitimate interests and rights of its citizens to a decent life, thereby embodying a policy that is contrary to human rights and humanitarian values.

We believe that such discriminatory practice is counterproductive, unjust and senseless. We regard it as a challenge to the entire system of international relations, as it undermines the basis for regional and global stability and normalizes the use of sanctions. The long-term pressure on Cuba by the United States is having a destructive effect on the process of Havana's full-scale integration into the global financial and economic architecture and on Cuba's ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

We saw it as a positive when the United States decided to abstain in the voting on resolution 71/5, on 26 October 2016 (see A/72/PV.32), as that reflected the emerging general pivot of the United States stance towards Cuba. However, the full-fledged recovery of the relations between Cuba and the United States never took place, following the arrival of the new Administration in Washington, D.C. On the contrary, we are now witnessing clear regression: stagnation in movement on issues that are fundamentally important for both countries, growing tensions in inter-State relations and the general deterioration of ties that were being established between the two countries.

Today, we again hear hostile rhetoric in the spirit of the Cold War. Instead of trying for normalization, a course of action has been set to tighten the blockade and increase political pressure on the Cuban leadership under far-fetched pretexts. Both chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation addressed an appeal to the General Assembly and to the parliaments of States Members of the United Nations condemning that course of action. The texts of those statements have been circulated as General Assembly documents under agenda item 42.

Given the current situation and in accordance with its principled stance, the Russian Federation will vote in favour of draft resolution A/72/L.2, calling for the full ending of the blockade on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, such as the non-infringement of national sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States and the need to resolve disputes by peaceful means in a way that does not jeopardize international peace, security and justice.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I join in the expression of condolences to the Government and people of the United States for the despicable terrorist attack that took place in New York, the home of this Organization's Headquarters, and I extend my condolences to Argentina and Belgium for the citizens of those countries who were killed in the attack.

Colombia welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, and his entire delegation. We are also grateful for the report of the Secretary-General (A/72/94), as well as the holding of today's important debate in which the membership of the United Nations will pronounce their positions on a resolution first adopted 26 years ago, in 1992: "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (resolution 47/19).

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made earlier by the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States; and the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

As we have previously stated in this Hall, the commercial, economic and financial blockade imposed against Cuba is contrary to international law and the spirit and principles that inspire the Charter of the United Nations. Since the adoption of resolution 47/19 26 years ago, Colombia, like the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean and like the great majority of the States Members of this Organization, has expressed its unrestricted support for Cuba by voting in favour this resolution. That decision is evidence of our stance with regard to the non-imposition of unilateral coercive measures by States and is based on international law and adherence to the principles of political

independence, the self-determination of peoples and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations.

Colombia reiterates its conviction that Member States must increasingly foster relations of cooperation and friendship based on multilateralism and respect for the principle of sovereign equality, as enshrined in Chapter I of the Charter of the United Nations. That objective will undoubtedly allow us to strengthen confidence to tackle, together and with greater determination, the challenges that States face at the global level.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): Before I deliver my national statement on behalf of the South African Government, I would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to the United States of America, Argentina and Belgium for the tragic event that took place yesterday in lower Manhattan. Our hearts and prayers go to the bereaved families and those still fighting for their lives.

We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to this important debate, which seeks to end the long-standing embargo.

South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of Gabon, on behalf of the Group of African States; and the representative of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We take note of the Secretary-General's report A/72/94, of 26 July, which describes the current state of affairs under the United States economic, commercial and financial embargo against the sister country of Cuba and its people. South Africa has also taken note of the announcement made on 16 June regarding a new United States policy towards Cuba, which signaled a shift from the reconciliation and improved relationship that had been initiated between Cuba and the United States under the Obama Administration and reaffirmed the United States statutory embargo on Cuba. I want to express our disappointment that the current United States Administration has chosen a path of regression in the normalization of relations with Cuba that reinforces the isolation of the Cuban people and further harms them.

South Africa has a long-standing position of support for the resolution on the necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba. The South Africa Parliament adopted a resolution in August 2014 calling upon the then President of the United States to lift the blockade immediately and engage Cuba more decisively. It is a position that reflects the sentiment of South Africans and the people of Africa.

We therefore urge the international community to work together to free Cuba from the political, economic, commercial and financial shackles under the embargo that the United States has imposed upon that country for more than half a century. We believe that the United States embargo was, and is, a travesty of justice, which should not continue to be in place in these modern times, particularly since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The adverse effects of unilateral, coercive measures by the United States on crucial sectors in Cuba — such as public health, nutrition and agriculture, banking, trade, investment and tourism — deprive the Cuban people of their basic human rights. They also hinder Cuba's well-documented efforts to achieve sustainable development, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

South Africa and Cuba enjoy solid bilateral and diplomatic relations. Our diplomatic relations over the 23 years since the dawn of democracy in 1994 in South Africa serve as a successful and exemplary model of South-South cooperation. It is a contribution to international relations and understanding. Our cooperation, supported by a set of bilateral agreements covering a wide range of areas, has a direct impact on the people of both countries. It influences their livelihood, development and understanding of one another, and it will be further enhanced once the embargo is lifted.

The unilateral and illegal total blockade of Cuba by the United States also affects bilateral trade between South Africa and Cuba, as the extraterritorial application of the sanctions on third countries has prevented South African businesses from pursuing trade and investment opportunities with Cuba. South Africa therefore joins the international community in condemning this unilateral action and calls on the United States of America to implement measures to immediately repeal those inhumane actions.

Those actions are contrary to the purposes, principles and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, especially the principles of the sovereign

equality of States and non-interference in the domestic affairs of Member States. The severe economic and financial restrictions that are stifling the economic and social development of Cuba and thereby further exacerbating the hardships and suffering of the people of Cuba are unacceptable.

It is in that context that the Republic of South Africa reiterates its unconditional support for the implementation of this draft resolution. We appeal once again to the international community to redouble its efforts to promote a constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries with a view to achieving the objectives of all the relevant United Nations resolutions already adopted on this matter, and to ensure the sustainable progress of the people of Cuba. We would like to request third-party countries to also support Cuba and its people by repealing all domestic laws and regulations that contribute to hampering their development.

Let us join hands together in global solidarity to end the embargo, and let us vote in support of the draft resolution to end the embargo on Cuba, as we did overwhelmingly in 2016. We cannot afford to lose this historic opportunity. Now is the time.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China expresses its condemnation of the attack that took place in New York City yesterday and conveys its condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and sympathy to those who were injured.

China associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In 2015 the United Nations development summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, thereby ushering in a new era for the global cause of sustainable development and charting a course for the development of all countries and international cooperation to that end. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the core task of the whole world in the area of development. All countries need to adhere to the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and benefit-sharing, and join hands in responding to challenges, creating new opportunities and seeking new drivers for development. They should use their respective advantages to help one another to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Given those ambitions, the economic blockade and sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba should end immediately.

For 26 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted, by an overwhelming majority, the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", urging all States to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and principles of international law, and repeal or invalidate all laws and measure that have extraterritorial effects and affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation.

It is regrettable, however, that for years those resolutions have not been effectively implemented and that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba continues. The blockade violates the purposes and principles of the Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. It has caused enormous economic and financial losses to Cuba and has impeded the efforts of the Cuban people to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, including the eradication of poverty. The blockade has undermined the rights of the Cuban people to survival and to development and has affected other countries' normal economic, commercial and financial exchanges with Cuba.

China has always advocated respect for the right of every country to independently choose its own system and path towards development and has opposed unilateral sanctions against other States by military, political, economic or other means. China has strictly observed and implemented the relevant resolutions. We have maintained with Cuba economic and trade relations and people-to-people exchanges, and our friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields is making continuous progress. That is in line with the desire of our two peoples and is conducive to the economic and social development of Cuba.

Currently, the world is undergoing great development, transformation and adjustment. Peace, development, cooperation and win-win outcomes have become the trend of our time. Exchanges and cooperation on an equal footing among countries are part of that general trend, and dialogue on an equal footing and friendly consultation represent the best way to resolve differences.

The recent restoration of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba was an important step towards the normalization of their relations.

China hopes that the United States and Cuba will continue to advance the process of normalization of their relationship, that the United States will comprehensively repeal its policy of blockading Cuba as soon as possible and that the United States and Cuba will develop normal relations in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter and basic norms governing international relations. That is in the common interests of both the United States and Cuba, and their peoples, and is conducive to the peace and stability of the Americas, as well as the common development of the international community.

China will once again vote in favour of the draft resolution (A/72/L.2), submitted by Cuba under this agenda item.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico joins in the condolences expressed to Argentina, Belgium and the United States for the loss of their citizens, innocent victims of the criminal act of terrorism that occurred yesterday in this city. We assure them of the solidarity of the Government and the people of Mexico.

We welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Cuba, and we thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the item we are addressing today (A/72/94).

Mexico is once again participating in the discussion on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba because we are convinced that international relations should promote peace and harmony among States while also promoting the prosperity of our peoples. Regional economic growth, sustainable development and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in a context of mutual respect, are essential aspects of good-neighbourliness. With this conviction, Mexico has supported the process under way of normalizing relations between Cuba and the United States.

Mexico reiterates its rejection of the unilateral actions against the Republic of Cuba, including the imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo for more than five decades. That is because it is contrary to international law and goes against the basic principles that should sustain friendly and cooperative relationships between States, principles that are set out in the Charter of the United Nations and which were endorsed by the General Assembly.

Mexico issues a brotherly appeal to both Governments to find common ground through dialogue and in that way resolve their differences in a context of mutual respect and recognition of the sovereignty of both nations.

Mexico is convinced that the elimination of the economic, commercial and financial embargo will enable Cuba to modernize its social and economic model and will facilitate its access to the international financial system. It would help it to rebuild more swiftly in the wake of Hurricane Irma and would promote natural trade and investment flows in the region.

The Mexican Government is aiding the process of modernizing the social and economic model in Cuba with technical assistance, exchange of experiences and capacity-building to implement economic reforms, while recognizing that that process will generate development opportunities for Cuban society. We recognize the actions undertaken by the Government of Cuba to fulfil its international commitments on development, as social development lies at the heart of Cuba's policies, strategies and public programmes. Cuba has demonstrated a firm commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mexico and Cuba share a historic and deep-rooted relationship, which is why the Government of Mexico reiterates its friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people and with its desire to continue working together on matters of common interest.

Ms. Flores Herrera (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express the solidarity of the Government of Panama in the face of the tragic and irreparable loss of human lives as a result of the attack that took place yesterday in this city. We express our deepest sympathy to the peoples and the Governments of the United States of America, Argentina and Belgium. We most vehemently condemn those brutal and unjustifiable actions, which violate the integrity of human beings and the stability of the global community.

With regard to today's agenda item, I wish to extend our congratulations to Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla and to the delegation of Cuba accompanying him for this discussion of draft resolution A/72/L.2.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Ecuador, El Salvador and Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77

and China, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, respectively. We wish to make some further comments in our national capacity.

In keeping with the historic position that we have maintained on today's issue, Panama will once again vote in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", for we believe that elimination of that embargo cannot be postponed any longer in order to foster the full development of the Cuban people.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report in document A/72/94, Panama, as a founding Member of the United Nations and a State that advocates peace, maintains friendly and cooperative relations with all States on the basis of inclusion and respect for the principles of justice and international law. In that regard, Panama today retains the optimism with which, during the seventh Summit of the Americas, in 2015, we witnessed the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Governments of the United States and Cuba and with that the possibility of ending their estrangement for the benefit of both States and for our entire region.

In September in this very Hall, referring to Cuban-United States relations, President Juan Carlos Varela stated:

> "As we near the next Summit of the Americas, in Lima, we must approach it with a constructive spirit and an openness to dialogue to analyse the problems of the region and uphold peace and unity across the Americas." (*A/72/PV.7, p. 16*)

As we once again vote in favour of lifting the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, Panama also wishes to see a renewal of the necessary dialogue between the United States and Cuba, for we believe there is an opportunity for both to continue advancing on a shared agenda. As we add our voice to those of the great majority of nations, Panama reasserts its firm commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate means to achieve the resolution of disputes between States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): It is now a real pleasure for me to give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.2.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and the Government of Cuba, I would like to express to the people and the Government of the United States, Mayor Bill de Blasio, Governor Andrew Cuomo and other New York officials, as well as to the citizens of New York and the families of the victims in particular, our most heartfelt condolences for the terrorist act that took place yesterday afternoon. I also express our deepest sympathy to the peoples and the Governments of Argentina and Belgium.

I most vehemently condemn the disrespectful, offensive and interfering statement by the Ambassador of the United States to the United Nations against Cuba and against the Cuban Government just a few minutes ago. I remind her that the United States — where flagrant violations of human rights are committed that cause great concern in the international community — does not have the slightest moral authority to criticize Cuba, a small, united country with an extensive, recognized international record. It is the home of noble, hardworking and friendly people.

She spoke on behalf of the leader of an empire that is responsible for most of the wars being waged on the planet today, in which innocent people are murdered and which is the decisive factor in global instability and serious threats to international peace and security, trampling on international law and the Charter of the United Nations, which she just cynically invoked.

It has not been 55 years; the Ambassador of the United States erred in her first sentence. There have been 26 sessions of the General Assembly, and more than a century has passed since the origin of the events being discussed today. She is lying. She is using the same style that prevails in United States policy today. It all started before the Cuban nation even existed. When the Cuban people first rose up in armed rebellion in 1868, the appetites for annexation and domination by what was and is today United States imperialism had already been unleashed.

In 1898, using a pretext, as is characteristic of the modern history of the United States — the explosion of the ship *Maine* in a Cuban port — the United States entered as allies of the Cuban independence forces and then occupied the country as invaders and imposed the Platt Amendment, which curtailed Cuba's independence and sovereignty. Three military occupations were carried out, imposing 60 years of absolute domination, which came to an end on 1 January 1959 with the entry

of the rebel army into Havana and the triumph of the Cuban revolution, which wages the same battles today that have inspired its people for more than 100 years.

She is lying. She used a phrase attributing to a supposedly Cuban source a statement on the so-called October crisis, or the Cuban missile crisis. I invite her to tell us who her source is — who the author is — and to provide evidence. It sounds like one of the tweets that proliferate in this country in these times of hatred, division and dirty politics.

With the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the Government of the United States made regime change its objective. The policy announced by President Trump on 16 June is not new; it is the same policy, an old policy rooted in the past.

She referred to the eminent United States Ambassador Adlai Stevenson. She forgot to mention that he was the person who, deceived by his own Government, had the unfortunate duty to show, in a Security Council meeting, photographs of what were supposedly Cuban aircraft bearing the emblem of the Cuban Air Force, which on 15 April bombed the city of Havana, causing much destruction and serving as a prelude to the attack, the invasion of the Playa Girón, the Bay of Pigs. Those bombings and the involuntary lie of Ambassador Stevenson, who had been deceived by his Government, occurred even before the proclamation of the socialist character of the Cuban revolution.

She spoke about the October crisis. These days we are hearing talk of President Kennedy's assassination and the declassification of documents. The truth has been hidden from the people of the United States for too long. May all documents be declassified. But if she wants to talk about those issues, I suggest that she read the book *Trained to Kill: The Inside Story of CIA Plots against Castro, Kennedy, and Che*, by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent Veciana, in which he recounts his meeting with the CIA agent David Phillips and with Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas during the third week of September 1963. It is a history of lies and aggression, of Operation Northwoods and Operation Mongoose. Recently declassified information reveals that at that time the United States had 261,000 soldiers standing ready for direct invasion of Cuba. There were more than 700 agents at the CIA's largest base, in Florida — the CIA's largest base until it established an even bigger one in Saigon.

She uses a style reminiscent of the trial of Alice in Wonderland: sentence first, verdict afterwards.

I speak on behalf of my people, and I also speak on behalf of those who cannot call on President Trump and the Ambassador of the United States by their names, but who share my feelings and think as I do.

At least she has recognized the total isolation of the United States in this Hall and in the world. It stands alone when it comes to the embargo against Cuba. She disregards the weight of the truth and underestimates the strength of one just idea in the depths of a cave, which is more powerful than an army, as José Martí said. He wrote, in an unfinished letter that he carried close to his heart,

> "Every day I am in danger of giving my life for my country and for my duty ... to prevent in time, with the independence of Cuba, the United States from extending its hold across the Antilles and falling with greater force on our lands of America."

Everything began much longer than 26 years ago — much longer than 55 years ago. Along with the military aggression, the fabrication of pretexts, plans for direct invasion, measures to strangle our economy, State terrorism, destabilization and subversion, there was a proposal in the infamous memorandum of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lester Mallory, which was signed on the 6 April 1960. In it, he wrote that the embargo on Cuba was created to provoke "disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship" by "denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government."

Nonetheless, when President Raúl Castro Ruz and President Barack Obama made surprising and hopeful announcements on 17 December 2014, President Obama described the embargo as failed and obsolete, ineffective in achieving its objectives, causing harm to the Cuban people and isolating the United States Government. Later he described it as useless in advancing the interests of the United States — failed, senseless, not viable and a burden for citizens.

But the embargo was never recognized as a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of Cubans, which the United States Ambassador cynically omitted a few hours ago, nor was it recognized as inconsistent with international law or as an act of

genocide as defined by the Geneva Convention, nor was its goal of subjugating our people renounced.

Nonetheless, the then President of the United States repeatedly stated his decision to use his executive powers and work with Congress to lift the blockade. A practical reflection of that intention was the abstention by the United States in the voting on this resolution in 2016, which the United States Ambassador has just mocked.

During that period, substantial progress was made in terms of diplomatic relations, dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest and benefit. But during the past two years the embargo was maintained in all fundamental aspects, although some executive decisions were made to modify its implementation in a very limited but positive way. The way in which the use of travel licences was expanded was significant, within the legislative prohibition on travel to Cuba — which is a violation of the rights and civil liberties of students of the United States, which the Ambassador also failed to mention. Tangible results were also achieved in bilateral cooperation, to our mutual benefit, in areas as important as confronting terrorism, drug trafficking and cybercrime.

On 16 June, President Donald Trump proclaimed the embargo a fundamental axis of his anti-Cuban policy and announced a series of measures meant to reinforce it. In an antiquated, hostile speech befitting the Cold War, and before an audience composed of, among others, bitter Batista-ists, annexationists and terrorists, the United States Government returned to worn-out allegations of supposed human rights violations in Cuba to justify the tightening of the embargo. In this Hall this morning we heard his echo.

President Trump does not have the slightest moral authority to question Cuba. He leads a Government of millionaires that intends to implement brutal measures against the poor and the low-income families of this country, against minorities and immigrants. He pursues a programme that encourages hatred and division and preaches a dangerous exceptionalism and supremacy disguised as patriotism that will lead to more violence. He ignores the support of his voters — two thirds of United States citizens, as well as Cuban residents in the United States — for ending the embargo.

Current United States policies harm citizens. Corruption of policy — which has been hijacked by so-called special interests, that is, by corporate interests and money — reigns. There are no guarantees of education, health care or social security. There are restrictions on union organizing and terrible gender-based discrimination.

Deserving of condemnation are the use of torture; murders of African-Americans by the police; the civilian deaths caused by its troops; the indiscriminate and racially differentiated death penalty; the murders, repression and police surveillance of immigrants; the separation of families; the detention and deportation of minors; and the brutal measures threatening the children of illegal immigrants who grew up and were educated in the United States. This is the Government that lost the popular vote.

The United States Ambassador has told us her dream. I prefer to repeat that of Martin Luther King, when he said:

> "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed ... that all men are created equal ... let freedom ring".

She has come to tell us that she recognizes that the future of the island rests in the hands of the Cuban people. She is telling an absolute lie. It was never that way, throughout history. It is a history of the intent to achieve domination and hegemony over Cuba.

The announced policy aims to roll relations back to a past of confrontation to satisfy the spurious interests of extremist circles of the United States right and a frustrated and ageing minority of Cuban origin in Florida. The presidential memorandum establishing the policy towards Cuba includes, among other measures, new prohibitions on economic, commercial and financial relations between United States companies and Cuban enterprises. It also restricts the freedom to travel of United States citizens with the elimination of individual trips under the category of people-to-people exchanges and establishes surveillance measures for the rest of visitors from that country.

During the past few weeks, President Trump has on four different occasions reiterated that his Government will not lift the embargo against Cuba unless Cuba introduces changes in its domestic order. Today we reaffirm that Cuba will never agree to conditions or impositions. We remind the President and his Ambassador that that approach, which was used by 10 or so of his predecessors, has never worked and never

will. He will be one more in the account of a policy anchored in the past.

More recently, under the pretext of ailments affecting some diplomats in Havana, without the slightest evidence of their cause or origin — they lie when they talk about attacks or incidents — or without any conclusions from ongoing investigations, the Government of the United States has adopted new political measures against Cuba, which further tighten the embargo and affect bilateral relations as a whole.

Among those measures, he suspended the issuing of immigrant and travelers' visas in the Consulate in Havana, which prejudices the rights of citizens to travel freely and visit the country for short periods, as more than 163,000 Cubans have done this year. It also seriously hampers the family reunification of others under the bilateral agreement to issue no fewer than 20,000 immigrant visas every year. The requirement that travellers have face-to-face interviews at United States Consulates in third countries and for immigrants at the United States Consular Section in Bogotá will enormously increase the red tape and make it unviable for many people. We did not hear about their rights in the speeches of the United States.

One can in no way justify the harm caused to people and their families in order to pursue political objectives that are against Cuba's constitutional order. The United States Government, with the political goal of restricting travel and harming international tourism to Cuba, has also issued an unfounded and mendacious warning to United States citizens to prevent them from visiting our country.

By the unjustified expulsion of the Cuban staff working at our Consulate General in Washington, D.C. — the only one in the United States — they have seriously impaired its ability to provide services to American travellers and especially to Cubans residents here, who have the absolute right to visit and enjoy normal relations with their nation.

Likewise, the staff of our Embassy has been arbitrarily and groundlessly reduced, which has led, among other consequences, to the dismantling of its Economic-Commercial Office, with the perverse political purpose of impeding the United States business sector, which is genuinely interested in exploring the business opportunities in Cuba that still exist within the restrictive framework of the embargo regulations.

It is no surprise, having heard what the Ambassador said here, and earlier her leaders, that the President of the United States ignores the unanimous international support for the bilateral progress, now reversed, and the similar demand for the immediate, absolute and unconditional end to the embargo.

As President Raúl Castro Ruz stated on 14 July,

> "We reaffirm that any strategy that seeks to destroy the revolution, whether through coercion and pressures, or resort to subtle methods, will fail ... . Cuba has the will to continue to negotiate pending bilateral matters with the United States, on the basis of equality and respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country, and to continue the respectful dialogue and cooperation on matters of common interest with the American Government.
>
> "Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist, respecting their difference and promoting everything that benefits both countries and peoples, but Cuba should not be expected to make concessions inherent to its sovereignty and independence ... or to negotiate its principles or accept conditions of any kind, as we have never done so before in the history of the revolution".

Today, for the twenty-sixth consecutive time, Cuba is presenting to the General Assembly the draft resolution (A/72/L.2) entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". At the present time, that text has special relevance, given the setback from the actions taken by the new United States Administration against Cuba.

The embargo is the greatest impediment to the economic and social development of our country and to the implementation of the national plan in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is the main obstacle to the development of Cuba's economic, commercial and financial relations with the United States and the rest of the world. According to figures very carefully calculated by Cuban institutions, between April 2016 and April 2017 the embargo caused losses to the Cuban economy in the order of $4.3 billion. That figure is about twice as much as what would be needed in terms of annual direct foreign investment for the Cuban economy to move substantially towards development.

The accumulated losses amount to the enormous figure of $822.28 billion, taking into account the devaluation of the price of gold. At current prices, that figure is equivalent to $130.2 brillion. Dozens of banks in third countries have been affected in the latest period by the extreme and tenacious persecution of Cuban financial transactions. The embargo is contrary to international law, and its aggressive extraterritorial application harms the sovereignty of all States. It also damages economic and business interests throughout the world.

The United States Ambassador failed to mention that the embargo is a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans, men and women. Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, it can be defined as an act of genocide. It is also an obstacle to the international cooperation that Cuba offers in terms of its humanitarian aid to 81 countries in the South. The human damages caused by the application of that policy are incalculable. There is no Cuban family or social service in Cuba that does not suffer the privations and consequences of the blockade. Cuban emigration also faces discrimination and prejudice.

Over the past year, the Cuban company that imports and exports medical products, Medicuba S.A., made requests to 18 United States companies to buy supplies that were either refused or never responded to. Others, such as the United States corporation Promega, which is recognized for the development of diagnostic kits to determine the viral load in patients with HIV/AIDS, the hepatitis C virus or kidney disease, refused in June to sell its products to Medicuba, alleging that the Treasury Department maintained commercial sanctions that prohibited the sale of its products to the island.

On that same date, and with the same argument, the company New England Biolabs refused to supply Cuba with its products. It sells a wide range of enzymes, such as proteinase-K, a reagent that enables the diagnosis of viral diseases like dengue, Zika and chikungunya, and other enzymes that have multiple uses for the diagnosis of congenital malformations and the determination of compatibility between organ donors and patients in need of kidney, bone marrow and liver transplants, among others. Under that same argument, the company refused to provide to Cuba supplies of an entirely humanitarian nature.

In April, Radiopharma, a business of the German supplier Eckert & Ziegler, refused to supply Medicuba with the GalliaPharm 68Ge/68Ga pharmacy grade generator with its components, which is equipment that is used in the diagnosis of prostate cancer. According to the company, it was not possible to supply the product directly to Cuba, nor through a third country, because of the embargo.

The cardiology service of the Hermanos Ameijeiras clinical surgical hospital urgently needs a circulatory assistance device to treat cardiogenic shock and for interventional cardiology and electro-physiology, which facilitates recovery from heart failure and the prolongation of the patient's life. The United States company Abiomed, a leader in the global market in those products, has the Impella system, which is ideal for treating such conditions. In September 2016 and this February, Medicuba contacted it to discuss the possibility of incorporating its product into Cuba's health system; however, it has so far refused to respond.

We are deeply grateful to all the Governments, peoples, parliaments, political parties and social movements, civil-society representatives and international and regional organizations that have contributed their voices and votes, year after year, to support the justness and urgency of the abolition of the embargo. We also convey our sincere gratitude to the vast majority of the American people for their support for this praiseworthy cause.

It offends the conscience of humankind that the Ambassador of the United States has referred to the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela in an unacceptable and interfering manner. It offends the heroic people of Venezuela, its civil-military union and the Bolivarian and Chavista Government led by President Nicolás Maduro Moros. The United States Government lies when it declares that Venezuela poses a threat to its national security. It is curious, given that it has the largest certified hydrocarbon reserves in the world. As the liberator Simón Bolívar wrote, the United States seems to be destined by Providence to plague the Americas with misery in the name of liberty. I respond to the Ambassador with Bolívar's words.

We are in the midst of a fair and constitutional electoral process in Cuba, where votes are not bought, special interests do not prevail and dishonest campaigns do not demand money. In our elections, the will of the

voters is not manipulated, and division and hate is not spread.

We especially commend all those who have expressed their concern and rejection of the coercive measures announced by the current United States Government. The Cuban people will never cease in their efforts to build a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation. We will persist with the consensus of our people and especially the patriotic commitment of the youngest Cubans in the anti-imperialist struggle and in defence of our independence, for which tens of thousands of Cubans have already fallen, and we have taken the greatest risks, as we demonstrated in Playa Girón and in the face of all threats. We will be eternally loyal to the legacy of José Martí and Fidel Castro Ruz.

Our people are following this debate with hope. On behalf of them, I ask those present to vote in favour of draft resolution A/72/L.2, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/72/L.2.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote should be limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): The United States believes that the people of Cuba deserve a stable, prosperous and democratic country. We strongly support their right to freely determine their own future. It is the Cuban Government and not the United States that continues to deprive the Cuban people of this aspiration. Our sanctions against Cuba are just one part of our overall effort to help all in Cuba freely exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms and choose their own destiny. For that reason, we shall vote against and strongly oppose the draft resolution contained in document A/72/L.2.

Every year, the Cuban Government uses this draft resolution to identify the United States as its scapegoat in order to shift blame away from its own policy failures. The Cuban Government continues to isolate the Cuban people while disingenuously blaming the embargo. In fact, Cuba currently has one of the most restrictive economies in the world as a direct result of its Government's policies. Irrespective of United States policy, the Cuban economy will not thrive until the Cuban Government allows a free labour market, fully empowers Cuban entrepreneurs, respects intellectual property rights, allows unfettered access to information via the Internet, opens its State monopolies to private competition, and adopts sound macroeconomic policies.

The United States remains a deep and abiding friend of the Cuban people. Our policy emphasizes advancing human rights and democracy on the island while ensuring that our engagement benefits the Cuban people and not their dictatorial regime. Our policy focuses on engagement with the Cuban people so as to give them the support and tools they need to move forward independently of the obstacles imposed by their own Government.

The United States continues to call on the Cuban Government to allow the people in Cuba to enjoy political and economic freedom. The Cuban Government continues its tactics of politically motivated detentions, harassment and police violence against those who peacefully seek freedom for political prisoners and who advocate on behalf of positive political and social change. These practices fly in the face of the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly guaranteed in the Cuban Constitution.

This draft resolution is a distraction from the real problems facing the Cuban people. Therefore, the United States strongly opposes it. Even if the United States lifted the embargo today, Cubans would not be able to realize their potential without significant political, economic and social reforms by their own Government. We encourage this body to support the desire of all in Cuba to determine their own future and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Doing so would advance the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes for which the United Nations was created. The Cuban people deserve no less, and the United States will continue to pursue policies that aid them in their quest for real freedom and democracy.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank our brother, Comrade Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his words, which always reach the hearts of the peoples of the world. We thank our sister delegation of Cuba for being here with us today and for sharing the information that confirms once again that the human rights of an entire people are being violated

by the economic, financial and commercial blockade against Cuba. Today we confirm our support for and solidarity and deep friendship with the people of José Martí and Fidel and Raúl Castro Ruz.

Fifty-eight years after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel, and almost one year after his passing, we feel his absence deeply. However, his historical legacy continues to grow among us and is enhanced by all his teachings in the struggle for freedom, dignity and the restitution of rights to the peoples of Latin America, the Caribbean and the world. We also want to express our thoughts, prayers and solidarity with all the Cuban brothers affected by the passage of Hurricane Irma.

For almost 60 years the Cuban people have demonstrated an iron will in the face of the imposition of the dishonourable United States law establishing the blockade, whose objective is to destroy the tenets of the Cuban Revolution and hinder the progress of a whole nation. Cuba, our sister, remains the symbol of humanism and an example of solidarity and social, cultural and scientific development in the world. Cuba stands with its head held high, defending its sovereignty, self-determination and its socialist revolution. As our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, says, there is Cuba, firm, unwavering, unbreakable. The determination of Cuba has led the General Assembly to vote almost unanimously for the cessation of the blockade, yet the blockade continues, and the positive steps taken by President Obama to ease tensions between the United States and Cuba and to normalize relations between both countries have, unfortunately, been reversed.

We applaud the statement of the Government of Cuba, which reiterates its willingness to continue the respectful dialogue on and cooperation in matters of mutual interest, as well as the negotiation of pending bilateral matters with the Government of the United States of America. We hope that, as the Government of Cuba clearly states in its message, the United States will return to the path that former President Obama identified — a decisive forward movement on the lifting of the blockade against Cuba.

Latin America and the Caribbean demand that the United States Government put an immediate end once and for all to the blockade against Cuba, that it return to the Cuban people their legitimate territory of Guantánamo and that it accept the will of our peoples to live in peace, without interference, with friendly relations and mutual respect among all our nations.

I wish to conclude with the words of our President, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, who has said that the day will come when the blockade imposed by the empire against Cuba will be defeated by a multipolar world, when a unified Latin American and Caribbean has already determined to put an end to the blockade, and when the vast majority of the peoples of our planet vote every year — as they will today — for the United Nations to demand an end to this blockade. Therefore, Nicaragua will vote, as it always has, and with much pride, in favour of draft resolution A/72/L.2, submitted by the delegation of Cuba.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.2, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia,

Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Draft resolution was adopted by 191 votes to 2, with no abstentions (resolution 72/4).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor for explanations of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote should be limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Lind (Estonia): Before turning to our explanation of vote, I would like to add our voice to the condemnations of the terrorist attack that took place in New York on 31 October. Our thoughts are with all of those who have been affected.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the country of the European Free Trade Association, Liechtenstein, which is a member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with my statement.

The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba has a damaging impact on the economic situation of the country and negatively affects the living standards of the Cuban people. The recovery and reconstruction after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma this autumn could also be hampered. External trade and foreign investment will play a crucial role in setting the country on a path towards sustainable growth. Therefore, the EU considers that lifting the embargo could facilitate the opening of the Cuban economy to the benefit of the Cuban people.

The EU believes that positive change in Cuba is best brought about by closer engagement at all levels — Government, economy and civil society, and also through people-to-people exchanges. We therefore deeply regret that the new United States Administration has announced its intention to reintroduce restrictions on the country's relations with Cuba. The proposals to restrain individual self-directed travel would not only curtail the possibility for engagement with the Cuban people, but they would also hit Cuba's burgeoning private sector, which has benefited the most from such visits by individuals.

Beyond the damaging impact of the embargo on ordinary Cubans, unilateral sanctions by the United States, together with other unilateral administrative and judicial measures, are also negatively affecting the economic interests of the EU. We have firmly and continuously opposed any such measures, due to their extraterritorial impact on the European Union, in violation of commonly accepted rules of international trade. We cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures might impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba. The EU Council of Ministers therefore adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect against undue interference and problems for EU citizens, businesses and non-governmental organizations residing, working or operating in Cuba.

It is crucial that the United States continue to fully respect and implement the agreement reached at the summit between the European Union and the United States held in London in May 1998. That agreement covers waivers to Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government

to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind and an understanding regarding discipline for the strengthening of investment protection.

For the EU, opening doors and closer engagement are the way to go with Cuba. Today, we celebrate the start of the provisional application of the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, which was signed last year. It will put our bilateral relationship on a new and solid legal footing and sets out an agenda of critical engagement with Cuba that will also allow us to support and assist Cuba on its path towards reform and modernization.

We will also enhance dialogue and cooperation on issues on which we still have fundamental differences. To this end, the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement establishes a human rights dialogue as a key pillar of our relationship. We reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to fully grant its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and free access to information, to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and, following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba.

In contrast with Cuban achievements in health care and education, the slow progress of economic modernization seriously hampers Cuban economic development. In this context, we call for economic and social reforms to be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key concerns of the Cuban population.

With the EU-Cuba Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement, the EU offers Cuba a consistent and reliable partnership to support it as it seeks economic and social reforms, sustainable development and common solutions to global challenges, while the EU continues to promote democracy and respect for human rights. It is our considered view that the United States embargo does nothing to promote those aims, but, instead, impedes their achievement. Against this background, the member States of the European Union unanimously voted in favour of resolution 72/4.

Mr. Kim In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea voted in favour of resolution 72/4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", based on the principled stand of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77. My delegation condemns the embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba as an infringement of Cuba's sovereignty under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations and as a crime against humanity, human rights and civilization.

Each year for the past 25 years, since 1992, a resolution has been adopted opposing the economic embargo against Cuba, but the United States has turned a blind eye to its implementation. Today's resolution was adopted with all Member States voting in favour, except for the United States and Israel, which clearly shows the view shared by the international community, namely, that it opposes the economic embargo against Cuba. Mr. Trump's Administration's new anti-Cuban policies are the continuation of the failed United States policy of embargo against Cuba that have been in effect since the Republic of Cuba came into existence. It threatens the sovereignty and right to existence of the people and the Government of Cuba. It also hinders the normal development of the region.

Reality shows the hypocrisy of the United States, which is a country calling for the implementation of United Nations resolutions and clamouring for the rule of law and democracy in the world while implementing an arbitrary, high-handed and arrogant America First policy that gives greater value to United States federal law than to the Charter of the United Nations, thereby sacrificing others as it pursues its own interests. However, as in the past, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/4 by an overwhelming majority, thus demonstrating its support for and solidarity with the Cuban Government and the Cuban people's struggle for their righteous cause. It also shows the international community's condemnation of the America First policy.

The United States has manipulated the Security Council to denounce the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic-missile and satellite launches as a threat to international peace and security. Its rigged sanctions resolutions have only pushed the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to become a full-fledged nuclear and missile Power that is recognized as such by the entire world. Similarly, the United States' economic sanctions against Cuba

will only impel the Cuban people to build a more powerful Cuba.

My delegation takes this opportunity once again to express its strong support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of Cuba, who are fighting to defend their national dignity and sovereignty and to achieve unity and cooperation in the region in the face of the unilateral sanctions of the United States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.